THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No excise duty was imposed on stone, at par with marble slabs, tiles etc., in the last Budget. On the other hand, excise duty on articles of stone falling under heading No. 68.07 was reduced from 20% to 18% ad valorem.

(b) to (f) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Gupta Committee on Pay Scale of RRB Employees

454. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received the report of working group constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri R.C. Gupta to look into the disparities in the pay scale of the employees of rural banks; and

(b) if so, the action being taken by the Government to implement this report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) As reported by National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD), a Working Group under the Chairman ship of Shri R.C. Gupta was constituted by them in the year 1991 which submitted its report in February, 1992. The report was considered by the Government/ NABARD and appropriate instructions were issued by NABARD in March, 1993 to the banks. These, inter-alia, included methodology of implementing the National Industrial Tribunal (NIT) Award, loans and advances to be extended to RRB staff, clarifications on equation of posts in RRBs vis-a-vis sponsor banks and various aspects relating to fitment of RRB staff.

[English]

Committee on Intellectual Property Rights

455. SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a Committee under Intellectual Property Rights to check illegal publishing and sale of Government publications;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if no, the reasons therefor and other measures being taken to check such malpractices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) No such proposal is under consideration.

(c) Action for infringement of Copyright of Government work can be taken under the Copyright Act, 1957.

[Translation]

Financial Assistance to the Sick Units

456. Dr. ARVIND SHARMA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of sick industries in the country, State-wise;

(b) the details of financial assistance provided to such sick units during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise;

(c) the number of proposals for providing financial assistance to sick units are pending with the Union Government, State-wise; and

(d) the time by which the pending proposals are likely to be disposed of?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) : The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House to the extent available.

[English]

Projects of VEPZ

457. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether due to uncertainties since its inception, Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone (VEPZ) has finally made a turn-around;

(b) whether approval of 4 projects with an estimated investment of over Rs. 350 crores by the Union government have come as a shot in the arm of the VEPZ;

(c) if so, whether the Union Government have been approached for speedy approval of VEPZ; Phase II;

(d) if so, whether the Government have agreed to the proposal of the VEPZ, Phase II; and

(e) if so, the extent to which the amount of VEPZ is likely to be released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) The Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone has been operationalised with effect from 1.4. 1993 on completion of basic infrastructural facilities of the first phase covering an area of 163 acres. Development of the Zone has proceeded satisfactorily after transfer of land in a compact block by the State Government. 18 projects have so far been approved